

VZCZCXYZ0008
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #2543/01 3451959
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 111959Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0524

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 002543

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR IIP/G/WHA, INR/R/MR, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA STATE
FORL/WHA, DRL, S/P

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - PASSING OF GENERAL PINOCHET

¶1. Summary: Major dailies gave extensive coverage to General Pinochet's death, the Bachelet government's statement, and the demonstrations of Pinochet supporters and opponents. Two Concertacion Congressmen expressed surprise at the U.S. statement, noting the absence of a reference to U.S. intervention in the 1970s. All three major dailies ran editorial comments. End Summary.

U.S. Statements Noted

¶2. On December 11, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 101,000): "U.S. sympathizes with the victims of the (military) regime. (Margaret) Thatcher only expresses sadness over his death."

"Pinochet's dictatorship was one of the most difficult periods in Chile's history. Our thoughts today are with the victims of his regime and their families. We praise the people of Chile for building a society based on freedom, rule of law, and respect for human rights," said White House spokesman Tony Fratto.

¶3. On December 11, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 129,000): London "noted" the General's death and Chile's democratic progress. The White House underscored the "difficult" Pinochet era. The Bush administration recalled that the Pinochet dictatorship was a difficult period and expressed its sympathy to the victims of his regime. The Department of State labeled Pinochet a "controversial" figure that will be judged by the Chilean people. "Chileans responded to General Pinochet's government by reaffirming their commitment to democracy, pluralism, an open economy, and international engagement," said Department of State spokesperson Joanne Moore. Relations between the U.S. and Chile were tense during the Pinochet government because of human rights violations and the murder of former Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier in Washington.

¶4. On December 11, conservative, afternoon daily "La Segunda" (circ. 33,000 12/11): Some in the Concertacion were "surprised" by the White House statement. PPD Senator Roberto Munoz said that the U.S. statement "would have been much more effective if at the same time it had included a "mea culpa" about the U.S. intervention at the time. PS Senator Jaime Gazmuri said that he was also surprised given the "active intervention" of the United States in the "tragic experience of the Unidad Popular and Salvador Allende."

Pinochet Funeral Arrangements

¶5. On December 11, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 129,000): Government spokesman Ricardo Lagos Weber confirmed that General Pinochet would be rendered full honors as a former Army Commander-in-Chief. The government authorized all army facilities to fly their flags at half mast as a sign of mourning. Pinochet will be mourned at the Military Academy. His funeral will begin at 11:00 am on Tuesday with a mass, and his body will be taken to the Parque del Recuerdo Cemetery to be cremated. President Bachelet met with Army Commander-in-Chief General Izurieta to inform him she would not decree a state funeral or national

mourning and that she would not attend the ceremony. Defense Minister Vivianne Blanlot will attend the mass to "accompany" the army.

Reactions to Pinochet Death

¶6. On December 11, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 129,000) noted that:

-- UDI Senator and former Navy Commander-in-Chief Jorge Arancibia said the government was making "an unforgivable mistake" by not holding a state funeral for Pinochet.

-- Former Frei administration minister and OAS Secretary General Jos Miguel Insulza said that although Pinochet was never sentenced, human rights violations committed by his regime "are confirmed."

-- Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was "deeply saddened" with Pinochet's death. She will transmit her condolences to the Pinochet family, said AFP sources.

-- Spanish Judge Baltazar Garzon, who tried to take Pinochet to court for genocide, said the general's death must not stop other investigations of those in his regime who participated in the same crimes.

-- Former Presidents Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei and Ricardo Lagos declined to comment on Pinochet's death.

-- PPD president Sergio Bitar concurred with the government's decision to not hold a state funeral for Pinochet. "History has already judged him and there should be no state funeral," said Bitar.

-- The left called on former military regime collaborators to reveal information that will help to resolve pending human rights cases. "It is the right time to learn the truth," said Communist Party Secretary General Guillermo Teillier and Humanist Party former

SIPDIS
presidential candidate Tomas Hirsh.

-- Judge Alejandro Solis, who recently charged General Pinochet with the abduction, torture, and death of political prisoners at Villa Grimaldi detention center, said the next judicial step is to acquit the general in all pending cases.

-- Human rights attorney Carmen Hertz regretted that the general died without ever serving a sentence. PC attorney Eduardo Contreras quoted a poet and said, "It's a shame that death beat justice."

¶7. On December 11, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 101,000): The UDI harshly criticized the government for not rendering Pinochet state honors as former President.

Demonstrations by Supporters and Opponents

¶8. El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record (circ. 129,000, 12/11), La Tercera, conservative, independent (circ. 101,000, 12/11): About 1,500 supporters of Pinochet gathered outside the Military Hospital and then moved to the Military Academy to wait for the General's casket to arrive. About 5,000 people took to the streets to celebrate Pinochet's death in several parts of the city. There were serious incidents when the demonstrators tried to cross police barriers and approach La Moneda. In the poorer areas of the city individuals set up barricades and caused disturbances that led to confrontations with the police. There were also incidents involving members of the press who were physically attacked by some Pinochet supporters outside the military hospital.

Survey on State Funeral

¶9. On December 10, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 101,000): "La Tercera" survey shows that 55% of Chileans believe Pinochet should not be rendered state honors as former President when he dies. 27% said he should.

Editorials on Pinochet

¶10. On December 11, government-owned, editorially independent "La Nacion" (circ. 4.200) ran an editorial entitled, "Pinochet, Never Again." Quote:

"For the first time since that gloomy September 11, 1973, last night thousands of homes slept in peace... There will be those who will try to validate the dictator's legacy, but...the lesson that free men and women have learned is that human dignity has no room for shortcuts or explanations for regimes that came to be by force.... Pinochet had no principles.... He was always looking...to see which way the wind blew.... He was not even a good soldier. He not only betrayed the President of the Republic, but also his own comrades in arms at times that the country faced difficulty. We all know how he repaid General Carlos Prats for his service.... Pinochet will never have a monument as dignified as the one the army erected in memory of General Rene Schneider, killed by those who supported his dictatorship for 17 years.... The man who has had the most power in Chile's history is no longer with us. His family has the right to mourn him, but for love of country, don't ask for more.... Nations honor those who are fair and just and noteworthy. There is no room for dictators. The sense of relief that swept across our nation yesterday afternoon...is full of hope.... Survivors have won. Never again Pinochet."

¶11. On December 11, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 101,000) ran an editorial entitled "Augusto Pinochet (1915- 2006)." Quote:

"Chile's most important political figure in at least three decades has disappeared.... Much has been said and history will finally judge him. But in truth, something very unusual would have to happen to change the parameters by which his regime is measured. If we were to assess his legacy, one thing on which both sides -- supporters and opponents -- would agree is that his government was marked by human rights violation and a process of economic transformation.... One of the debates now is how his disappearance will change the political scenario.... Pinochet's disappearance marks the beginning of a new chapter in Chile's history. Although his death will not change the view that different political sectors have about him or his regime, we can begin now to put behind those differences that have marked our country since the 70s.... His passing away is a chance to finally overcome the break that our country suffered."

¶12. On December 11, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 129,000, 12/11) ran an editorial entitled "Augusto Pinochet Ugarte." Quote:

"The death of former Commander-in-Chief and President Pinochet marks the death of one of the individuals with the greatest impact in Chilean history during the 20th Century.... Pinochet's most important legacy was to give Chile a modern and entrepreneurial model, based on individual freedom and the right to own property.... The military government, in a series of complex stages...finally renewed political institutions...that allowed the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition in an unprecedented event.... The positive elements of his legacy are overshadowed by grave and unacceptable human rights violations...and his personal image was also undermined by the discovery of personal accounts abroad.... The strong feelings among those in favor and against the former president were evident yesterday in the massive demonstrations of sorrow by some and the happiness of others.... The debate about Pinochet will not be resolved in our time and perhaps never will.... But this should be the time to make a special effort for reconciliation among all those who on one side or the other fought from their own perspective for what they thought was best for Chile."

KELLY